much more vigor as decades before. At all occasions we parade our culture idols such as Padu Lampe. The national day, 18 March, has basically become a weeklong celebration. The importance of Papiamento is being stressed even more and more.

The process of globalization is also a 'threat' to Aruban culture. Tourism, cable television, the internet have become part of the modern Aruba. They have introduced the Arubans to another value system and way of life. The language of globalization unfortunately is not Papiamento but (American) English. Listen in on a conversation of Aruban teens and you will hear more English words than Papiamento. Some years ago Aruba was asked if she wanted closer ties with the European Union. In order words, if she wanted to remain an overseas country and territory (OCT) or become a most remote region of the Union. Aruba moved once more in the defining mode. Would closer ties with Europe mean we would have to welcome abortion, euthanasia, weed and gay marriages to our shores? Arubans are not Europeans but Caribbeans and Latin Americans, many said. Ask an Aruban what he has in common with a person living in South America and he will tell you that he is European. Just look at his standard of living and the democratic values. How interesting!

A few weeks ago an exposition on slavery was opened. For the first time we are publicly talking about the African slaves that lived in Aruba and their descendants. Is Aruba redefining herself as a nation of Indian/European/African stock? Is the community now saying that they are proud of their African heritage? Time will tell. Just after the exposition Jorge Ridderstaat published his book on the history of the Lago refinery. Are we finally acknowledging the fact that thousands of migrants came to Aruba and gave their best at the refinery and helped in the development of the island? Will we be able to say one day that the calypso, soca and steel pans they brought have become part and parcel of Aruban culture? Are we ready to come to terms with this part of our history? Time will tell.

Every generation, and even during the different stages in the life of a generation, the identity question is raised. As this community of 103000 plus humans live, love and work together a new identity is being fostered. Hopefully we will choose to define ourselves as a tolerant, democratic society where the rule of law is respected and diversity is celebrated.

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